

From: Washburn, Ben
Sent: Tue 5/6/2014 9:26:19 PM
Subject: OPA Daily Digest 5/6/14

OPA Daily Digest for 5/6/14

Congressional Inquiries:

Sen. Claire McCaskill (Mo.) – Letter – 5/2/14: Constituent concerns about the Strecker Forest/Bliss Ellisville site removal action. Due: 5/16/14. Contact: LaTonya Sanders, 7555 (open)

State Government Inquiries:

None

Press Inquiries:

KWQC-TV, Davenport, Iowa – 4/25/15: Questions about water issues in Muscatine, Iowa. Contact: Kris Lancaster, 7557 (open)

Des Moines Register – Joel Aschbrenner – 5/2/14: Questions regarding Dico site in Des Moines, Iowa. Contact: Ben Washburn, 7364 (open)

KOMU Channel 8, Columbia – Brynne Whittaker – 5/5/14: Questions about the West Lake Landfill Site in Bridgeton, Mo. Contact: Chris Whitley, 7394 (closed)

KSDK Channel 5, St. Louis – Grant Bissell – 5/5/14: Questions about the West Lake Landfill Site in Bridgeton, Mo. Contact: Chris Whitley, 7394 (closed)

Wall Street Journal – John Emshwiller – 5/6/14: Questions about West Lake Landfill Site in Bridgeton, Mo.
Contact: Ben Washburn, 7364 (open)

KSHB Ch. 41 Kansas City – Karen Dillon – 5/6/14: Questions regarding greenhouse gas emissions inventory and breakout by state and local areas. Contact: David Bryan, 7433 (closed)

BNA – Chris Brown – 5/6/14: Questions about H and M enforcement press release. Contact: Ben Washburn, 7364 (closed)

Environmental Stories:

Wichita Business Journal - EPA orders \$2M emissions-system upgrade to Conway natural gas storage facility - 5/5/14 - A Conway natural gas liquids storage facility will undergo a nearly \$2 million project to upgrade the facility and reduce harmful emissions, the Environmental Protection Agency announced Monday.
<http://www.bizjournals.com/wichita/news/2014/05/05/epa-orders-2m-emissions-system-upgrade-to-conway.html>

Associated Press - Natural gas storage firm to upgrade Kansas site - 5/6/14 - Environmental regulators say officials at natural gas liquids storage facility in central Kansas have agreed to spend \$2 million to reduce air pollution. <http://www.sfgate.com/news/science/article/Natural-gas-storage-firm-to-upgrade-Kansas-site-5455738.php>

Kiowa County Signal (Iowa) - Kansas Farm Bureau Insight: EPA rule could shut down agriculture - 5/5/14 - If EPA's proposed rule becomes law, many farming practices would require government approval through a complex process of federal permitting. EPA's so-called exemptions will not protect farmers and ranchers from the proposed waters rule. If farmlands are regulated as waters, farming and ranching will be difficult, if not impossible.
<http://www.kiowacountysignal.com/article/20140505/News/140509708>

WNAX Radio, Yankton, S.D. - Nebraska Farm Bureau Wants EPA Rule Withdrawn - 5/6/14 - Nebraska Farm Bureau is backing an effort by 219 House members in asking EPA to withdraw their proposed Waters of the U.S. Rule. EPA claims the proposal clarifies the Clean Water Act and provides several exemptions to agriculture. - See more at: <http://wnax.com/news/180081-nebraska-farm-bureau-wants-epa-rule-withdrawn/>

Des Moines Register - Utility-scale solar development in Iowa would need mandate - 5/6/14 - Iowa's push for renewable energy has sparked a \$10 billion investment in wind energy capacity, a new report shows. But what about solar? <http://www.desmoinesregister.com/story/money/agriculture/green-fields/2014/05/05/berkshire-hathaway-energy-executive-solar-iowa/8720691/>

NOTE: Paywall issues may keep you from seeing this article. Full text is included at the end of this email.

Midwest Energy News - Iowa lawmakers see tax credits opening wider door for solar - 5/6/14 - While solar advocates didn't get everything they wanted in the Iowa legislature this year, a nearly-unanimous vote to triple the state's tax-credit fund for rooftop installations is expected to have a major impact.

<http://www.midwestenergynews.com/2014/05/06/iowa-lawmakers-see-tax-credits-opening-wider-door-for-solar/>

AgriNews - Renewable fuels drive economic growth - 5/6/14 - An economic impact study found far-reaching benefits of renewable fuels for America's workers and the U.S. economy, including a \$184.5 billion economic output. <http://agrinews-pubs.com/Content/News/Latest-News/Article/Renewable-fuels-drive-economic-growth-/8/6/10291>

ThinkProgress - ALEC Has A New Tactic It's Using To Take Down The EPA - 5/2/14 - The American Legislative Exchange Council's (ALEC) mission to prevent the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency from regulating greenhouse gas emissions has expanded into an "unusual" coordinated campaign involving state attorneys general. <http://thinkprogress.org/climate/2014/05/02/3433615/alec-campaign-push/>

Associated Press - Fed report: Global warming disrupting Americans' lives - 5/6/14 - Global warming is rapidly turning America the beautiful into America the stormy, sneezy and dangerous, according to a new federal scientific report. And those shining seas? Rising and costly, the report says.

<http://www.kansascity.com/2014/05/06/5005465/fed-report-warming-disrupting.html>

Associated Press - For Obama, a renewed focus on climate - 5/3/14 - After years of putting other policy priorities first — and dismayed many liberal allies in the process — Obama is now getting into the weeds on climate change and considers it one of the key components of his legacy, according to aides and advisers.

http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/for-president-obama-a-renewed-focus-on-climate/2014/05/04/6b81412c-d144-11e3-9e25-188ebef1fa93b_story.html

The Guardian (U.K.) - Climate change is clear and present danger, says landmark US report - 5/4/14 -

National Climate Assessment, to be launched at White House on Tuesday, says effects of climate change are now being felt. <http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2014/may/04/climate-change-present-us-national-assessment>

Wichita Eagle - Arid opening to 2014 echoes Dust Bowl spring in 1936 - 5/3/14 - In fact, there has been precious little precipitation of any kind in Wichita in 2014. Just one year — 1936 — has had a drier opening four months since such record keeping began in 1889. <http://www.kansas.com/2014/05/03/3436733/arid-opening-to-2014-echoes-dust.html>

Wichita Eagle (blog) - Belated urgency on contaminated well water - 5/6/14 - It's good news that 10 affected homes have been hooked up to the municipal water supply, with service promised soon to the rest of the 114 homes in west Wichita where officials say private wells were contaminated by dry-cleaning chemicals.
<http://blogs.kansas.com/weblog/2014/05/belated-urgency-on-contaminated-well-water/>

Sioux City Journal (Iowa) - Effort to curb sewer odor continues in Riverside - 5/5/14 - The city's ongoing effort to control sewage odors in the Riverside neighborhood has been successful. Or, maybe it hasn't.
http://siouxcityjournal.com/news/local/govt-and-politics/effort-to-curb-sewer-odor-continues-in-riverside/article_5ba6236b-f075-5ed1-8045-2b466145abdc.html

Quad City Times - Many factors affect Sioux City neighborhood's odor - 5/6/14 - The city is continuing its struggle with sewage odors in Sioux City's Riverside neighborhood. The injection of chemicals into a sewer line has produced mixed results and some mixed opinions from people who live near the Riverside lift station.
http://qctimes.com/news/state-and-regional/iowa/many-factors-affect-sioux-city-neighborhood-s-odor/article_831e89f7-506b-5a62-a281-b75f1d1baaac.html

EcoWatch - Senate Should Not Circumvent Keystone XL Pipeline Process - 5/5/14 - On Friday we learned that a lot of Republican U.S. senators and a smattering of Democrats are once again trying to make an end run around a legitimate process to assess the impacts of the Keystone XL tar sands pipeline, in favor of moving legislation authorizing its immediate construction. <http://ecowatch.com/2014/05/05/senate-should-not-circumvent-keystonexl-process/>

New York Times - Climate Change Study Finds U.S. Is Already Widely Affected - 5/6/14 - The effects of human-induced climate change are being felt in every corner of the United States, scientists reported Tuesday, with water growing scarcer in dry regions, torrential rains increasing in wet regions, heat waves becoming more common and more severe, wildfires growing worse, and forests dying under assault from heat-loving insects.
<http://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/07/science/earth/climate-change-report.html>

EcoWatch - White House's Alarming Climate Change Study Calls For 'Urgent Action' - 5/6/14 - While it remains unclear how many definitive reports it will take to convince everybody that climate change is a real, not-so-distant threat to our planet, the one released by the White House Tuesday morning will go a long way toward that cause. <http://ecowatch.com/2014/05/06/white-house-climate-change-urgent/>

EcoWatch - With no staff and 'very little or no cybersecurity standards,' states ill-equipped to face threats - 5/5/14 - The annual membership directory of state utility regulators lists several hundred key staff members of the 50 state commissions. Not a single staff position in the 81 pages has "cybersecurity" in the title.
<http://www.eenews.net/stories/1059998934>

Domestic Fuel - Iowans Increase Use of Higher Blends of Renewables - 5/6/14 - New data from the Iowa Department of Revenue shows major growth in the use of Iowa Department of Revenue higher-level blends of ethanol and biodiesel in 2013. <http://domesticfuel.com/2014/05/06/iowans-increase-use-of-higher-blends-of-renewables/>

Christian Science Monitor - US looks at climate change at local and regional levels - 5/6/14 - The US National Climate Assessment details how climate changes are influencing health, infrastructure, water supply, agriculture and may be resulting in more frequent severe weather such as floods and droughts. <http://www.csmonitor.com/Environment/Latest-News-Wires/2014/0506/US-looks-at-climate-change-at-local-and-regional-levels>

Greenwire - White House to launch National Climate Assessment with fanfare tomorrow - 5/5/14 - The White House and federal agencies are planning a public outreach blitz tomorrow to coincide with the release of a high-profile scientific review of the effects climate change is already having on the United States. <http://www.eenews.net/greenwire/stories/1059999016/>

White House (release) - Climate Change Is Affecting Us Now - 5/6/14 - Today, we released the third National Climate Assessment, the most comprehensive look yet at how climate change is affecting the U.S. and critical sectors of the economy. The report confirms that climate change is not a distant threat -- it's affecting us now. http://www.whitehouse.gov/climate-change?utm_source=snapshot&utm_medium=email&utm_content=562014-topper

Climate Central - U.S. Climate Change Report Warns of Regional Impacts - 5/6/14 - On Tuesday, the federal government released its third report of climate change in the U.S. The report, called the National Climate Assessment, makes clear that climate change is a present-day issue and a growing threat. <http://www.climatecentral.org/news/new-report-climate-change-a-global-issue-with-regional-impacts-17404>

Christian Science Monitor - US looks at climate change at local and regional levels - 5/6/14 - The US National Climate Assessment details how climate changes are influencing health, infrastructure, water supply, agriculture and may be resulting in more frequent severe weather such as floods and droughts. <http://www.csmonitor.com/Environment/Latest-News-Wires/2014/0506/US-looks-at-climate-change-at-local-and-regional-levels>

Al Jazeera America - Climate change report unveils stern warnings - 5/6/14 - The latest report on climate change was released on Tuesday with warnings that future generations could be in dire trouble. According to the report, the average temperature could rise 2 to 4 degrees Fahrenheit in many areas over the next couple of decades leading to sea levels rising and more extreme weather. <http://america.aljazeera.com/watch/shows/live-news/2014/5/climate-change-reportunveilssternwarnings.html>

New York Times - Climate Change Study Finds U.S. Is Already Widely Affected - 5/6/14 - The effects of human-induced climate change are being felt in every corner of the United States, scientists reported Tuesday, with water growing scarcer in dry regions, torrential rains increasing in wet regions, heat waves becoming more common and more severe, wildfires growing worse, and forests dying under assault from heat-loving insects.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/07/science/earth/climate-change-report.html>

EcoWatch - White House's Alarming Climate Change Study Calls For 'Urgent Action' - 5/6/14 - While it remains unclear how many definitive reports it will take to convince everybody that climate change is a real, not-so-distant threat to our planet, the one released by the White House Tuesday morning will go a long way toward that cause. <http://ecowatch.com/2014/05/06/white-house-climate-change-urgent/>

Hill Heat - Green Responses to the National Climate Assessment - 5/6/14 - Joint statement on the Third National Climate Assessment of the U.S. Global Change Research Program from Earthjustice, Environmental Defense Fund, Center for American Progress, Natural Resources Defense Council, League of Conservation Voters, League of Women Voters, National Wildlife Federation, Sierra Club. <http://www.hillheat.com/articles/2014/05/06/green-responses-to-the-national-climate-assessment>

Earth Island Journal - White House's Alarming Climate Change Study Calls For 'Urgent Action' - 5/6/14 - No region, no economic sector will remain untouched by climate change, says White House science counselor John Podesta.

http://www.earthisland.org/journal/index.php/elist/eListRead/white_houses_alarming_climate_change_study_calls_for_urgent_action/

Christian Science Monitor - Climate change report: How to keep lights on when water is scarce (+video) - 5/6/14 - Climate change poses threats to the extraction, production, and distribution of energy across the US, according to a new climate-change report from the Obama administration. Much of the challenge for the energy industry revolves around its reliance on water for cooling and production needs.

<http://www.csmonitor.com/Environment/Energy-Voices/2014/0506/Climate-change-report-How-to-keep-lights-on-when-water-is-scarce-video>

Phys.org - Substantial improvements made in EPA's IRIS Program, report says - 5/6/14 - A new congressionally mandated report from the National Research Council says that changes EPA has proposed and implemented into its Integrated Risk Information System (IRIS) process are "substantial improvements."

<http://phys.org/news/2014-05-substantial-epa-iris.html>

Politico - John Podesta: Congress won't stop EPA's climate rules - 5/5/14 - White House counselor John Podesta said congressional attempts to trump EPA's climate rules will fail.

<http://www.politico.com/story/2014/05/john-podesta-epa-congress-106351.html>

The Hill (blog) - Podesta's challenge puts EPA funding on hot seat - 5/6/14 - White House senior adviser John Podesta threw down the gauntlet to congressional Republicans on attempts to minimize damage being done to the economy by President Obama's environmental regulations. <http://thehill.com/blogs/pundits-blog/energy-environment/205347-podestas-challenge-puts-epa-funding-on-hot-seat>

PBS Newshour - Obama, Democrats try to strike balance on climate change, energy politics - 5/6/14 - President Barack Obama is leaning into climate change Tuesday with the release of the third U.S. National Climate Assessment, a 1,300-page report on climate change that warns of dire consequences. <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/updates/obama-democrats-try-strike-balance-climate-change-energy-politics/>

National Geographic - Federal Report to Warn Climate Change Is Already Hurting Americans - 5/5/14 - The White House plans to release a major report Tuesday outlining how human-driven climate change is already affecting the environment in the United States and warning of more warming to come, possibly signaling a more aggressive response to the issue from the Obama administration. <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2014/05/140505-national-climate-assessment-global-warming-science-policy/>

Climate Central - U.S. Climate Change Report Warns of Regional Impacts - 5/6/14 - On Tuesday, the federal government released its third report of climate change in the U.S. The report, called the National Climate Assessment, makes clear that climate change is a present-day issue and a growing threat. <http://www.climatecentral.org/news/new-report-climate-change-a-global-issue-with-regional-impacts-17404>

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Lincoln Journal Star (Neb.) - Sandhills group challenges proposed transmission line - 5/5/14 - A grassroots group - Save the Sandhills - says a 220-mile power line proposed by the Nebraska Public Power District isn't necessary and threatens the fragile ecology of the Sandhills. http://journalstar.com/news/state-and-regional/sandhills-group-challenges-proposed-transmission-line/article_c9d89763-91d8-556c-b56e-021d9dff29ed.html

Al Jazeera America - How the Chesapeake Bay Became a New Front in States' vs. Federal Rights - 5/5/14 - When six states surrounding the bay failed to clean it up, the federal government stepped in, inadvertently setting off a fight that has made the bay an unexpected but critical battleground in the broader war between states' versus federal rights. <http://america.aljazeera.com/watch/shows/america-tonight/articles/2014/5/5/how-the-chesapeakebaybecameanewfrontinstatesvsfederalrights.html>

Greenwire - Ozone levels will rise dramatically as climate warms -- study - 5/5/14 - As the climate continues to warm and temperatures rise, concentrations of lung-irritating ground-level ozone could significantly increase over the next four decades, according to a new federal study. <http://www.eenews.net/greenwire/stories/1059999012/>

EcoWatch - New Report Documents Chemical Disasters and Environmental Injustice in the U.S. - 5/5/14 - Americans who face the greatest threat from potential toxic chemical disasters are predominantly from low income and minority communities, a new report released by the Environmental Justice and Health Alliance asserts. <http://ecowatch.com/2014/05/05/report-chemical-disasters-environmental-injustice/>

New York Times - At Chernobyl, Hints of Nature's Adaptation - 5/6/14 - Biologist Timothy Mousseau has been studying the lasting effects of radiation on the flora and fauna of Chernobyl, Ukraine. <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/06/science/nature-adapts-to-chernobyl.html>

Fox News Latino - Opinion: Protecting Clean Water For Our Families, Communities And Businesses - 5/5/14 - A new rule from the Obama Administration continues these efforts to protect our clean water. If enacted, the rule would protect the streams that flow into our rivers, farms, and drinking water supplies from toxic pollution. <http://latino.foxnews.com/latino/opinion/2014/05/05/opinion-protecting-clean-water-for-our-families-communities-businesses/>

Kansas Ag Network – EPA Moves Toward Approval of Enlist Duo Herbicide – 5/5/14 - The Enlist technology from Dow AgroSciences, a wholly-owned subsidiary of The Dow Chemical Company (NYSE: Dow), has reached another milestone in the regulatory review process. On Wednesday, the U.S. EPA announced its proposed decision to register Enlist Duo. <http://kansasagnetwork.com/2014/epa-moves-toward-approval-of-enlist-duo-herbicide/>

Reuters - Environment As Important As Genes In Autism (Study) - 5/5/14 - Environmental factors are more important than previously thought in leading to autism, as big a factor as genes, according to the largest analysis to date to look at how the brain disorder runs in families. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/05/05/environment-factor-genes-autism_n_5268276.html

Politico - John Podesta: Congress won't stop EPA's climate rules - 5/5/14 - White House counselor John Podesta said congressional attempts to trump EPA's climate rules will fail. <http://www.politico.com/story/2014/05/john-podesta-epa-congress-106351.html>

The Hill - House plans hearing on alleged EPA investigation obstruction - 5/5/14 - The House Oversight Committee has scheduled a hearing this week on allegations that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has obstructed some of its Office of Inspector General's investigations.

<http://thehill.com/policy/energy-environment/205229-house-plans-hearing-on-alleged-epa-investigation-obstruction>

Live Science - Smoke and Mirrors: Who's Really Fueling Those Bogus EPA Attacks? (Op-Ed) - 5/5/14 - Gina McCarthy didn't dwell much on the particulars, but the truth is, a small group of fossil-fuel interests and members of the U.S. Congress continue to use back-room political maneuvers and spurious public attacks in an attempt to demonize and hamstring the EPA. <http://www.livescience.com/45362-attacks-on-epa-bogus.html>

Cornell Chronicle (Ithaca, N.Y.) - Student-developed water monitor gets EPA support - 5/5/14 - A proposal to develop a portable, affordable turbidimeter – a tool for measuring water quality – has won a \$90,000 grant from the Environmental Protection Agency's People, Prosperity and the Planet (P3) student design competition. <http://www.news.cornell.edu/stories/2014/05/student-developed-water-monitor-gets-epa-support>

Fort Dodge Messenger (Humboldt, Iowa) - DNR fine is reduced | Branstad's intervention had been sought by city leaders - 5/6/14 - The city of Humboldt was successful in getting a fine from the Iowa Department of Natural Resources reduced from \$10,000 to \$2,000, City Administrator Aaron Burnett told the Humboldt City Council Monday. <http://www.messengernews.net/page/content.detail/id/575408/Humboldt-DNR-fine--is-reduced.html>

Christian Science Monitor - Solar power breakthrough hints at cheaper panels for more roofs (+video) - 5/5/14 - Two sets of scientists have reported promising results from a new recipe for solar cells, which could result in panels for solar power that are easier and cheaper to make. <http://www.csmonitor.com/Environment/2014/0505/Solar-power-breakthrough-hints-at-cheaper-panels-for-more-roofs-video>

KSN Ch. 3 Wichita - Council approves water installation for residents dealing with contamination - 5/6/14 - The Wichita City Council approved a plan Tuesday that would fast track the installation of water lines to residents dealing with contaminated groundwater. <http://ksn.com/2014/05/06/council-approves-water-installation-for-residents-dealing-with-contamination/>

Chicago Tribune - U.S. court rejects challenge to 2013 renewable fuel standard - 6/5/14 - A U.S. appeals court on Tuesday threw out an oil industry challenge to the Obama administration's 2013 biofuel mandate, ruling that the government has "wide latitude" to decide whether to modify renewable fuel use targets, and by how much. <http://www.chicagotribune.com/business/sns-rt-us-usa-court-energy-20140506,0,2478943.story>

Press Releases:

Link to all R7 press releases: <http://go.usa.gov/Qx5>

EPA Inspections Remedy Clean Water Act Violations by Poultry Operation near Green Ridge, Mo. – 5/6/14 –
Contact: Ben Washburn, 7364

Fact Sheets:

Link to all R7 fact sheets: <http://www.epa.gov/region7/factsheets>

None

Upcoming Administrator/RA Events:

* New additions noted with an asterisk

5/5-6/14 – Waters of the U.S. Outreach Event – Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa. Contact: Kris Lancaster, 7557

5/12/14 – Meet with Iowa Committee for Community Improvement (ICCI) Representatives, Des Moines, Iowa.
Contact: Dave Cozad, 7587

5/12-13/14 – Waters of the U.S. Outreach Event – University of Lincoln, Lincoln, Neb. Contact: Kris Lancaster, 7557

5/14/14 – State, Local, and Tribal Leaders Task Force on Climate Preparedness and Resilience Meeting, Des Moines, Iowa. Contact: Julia Cacho, 7071

5/15/14 – Small Business Majority Roundtable, Waterloo, Iowa. Contact: Julia Cacho, 7071

5/15/14 – OARM Diversity Training, Regional Office. Contact: Greg Davis, 7208

5/20-21/14 – Budget Planning Meeting, Washington, D.C. Contact: Julia Cacho, 7071

6/4/14 – OECA Visit, Regional Office. Contact: Deandre Singletary, 7373

6/5/14 – Incident Command System Training, Regional Office. Contact: Cecilia Tapia, 7733

6/12/14 – Joint R6/R7 COOP Meeting, Regional Office. Contact: Chris Taylor, 7373

6/24-25/14 – Four State Directors Meeting, Nebraska City, Neb. Contact: Wendy Lubbe, 7551

7/21-22/14 – Budget Forum, Washington, D.C. Contact: Julia Cacho, 7071

DRA:

5/15/14 – OARM Diversity Training, Regional Office. Contact: Greg Davis, 7208

5/20-21/14 – Budget Planning Meeting, Washington, D.C. Contact: Julia Cacho, 7071

6/24-25/14 – Four State Directors Meeting, Nebraska City, Neb. Contact: Wendy Lubbe, 7551

7/21-22/14 – Budget Forum, Washington, D.C. Contact: Julia Cacho, 7071

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RA/Immediate Office

None

Other Events

AWMD

None

CNSL

None

ECO/EJ

None

ENSV

None

PLMG

None

RA/OPA

9/29-30/14 - Healthy School Outreach, Missouri School Plant Managers' Association Conference, Four Seasons, Lake of the Ozarks, Mo. Contact: Kathleen Fenton, 7874 and Harry Diesel, 7382

SUPR

None

WWPD

5/5-8/14 – Environmental Leaders Institute State / Tribal / EPA Training Workshop, Shepherdstown, W.Va. Contact: Tabatha Adkins, 7128

5/12/14 – Meet with ICCI Representatives, Des Moines, Iowa. Contacts: Dave Cozad, 7587, Karen Flournoy, 7782

5/12-16/14 – National Total Maximum Daily Load/Measures and 303(d) Listing Conference, Denver, Co. Contacts: Tabatha Adkins, 7128, Bruce Perkins, 7067, Debby White, 7886

Des Moines Register

Utility-scale solar development in Iowa would need mandate

Donnelle Eller, deller@dmreg.com

12:48 a.m. CDT May 6, 2014

<http://www.desmoinesregister.com/story/money/agriculture/green-fields/2014/05/05/berkshire-hathaway-energy-executive-solar-iowa/8720691/>

Iowa's push for renewable energy has sparked a \$10 billion investment in wind energy capacity, a new report shows. But what about solar?

Jonathan Weisgall, Berkshire Hathaway Energy's vice president of legislative and regulatory affairs, said Iowa and other Midwestern states are unlikely to see large utilities invest in solar energy without setting standards that require it.

Weisgall said regulators must weigh costs more heavily than developing renewable resources when electric generation is added in the Midwest. And solar energy isn't cost-competitive with wind.

For example, California wants 33 percent of its power supply to come from renewable sources, such as wind, solar and geothermal, by 2020. The standard is creating large investment in solar energy, including from Berkshire Hathaway Energy, the parent of MidAmerican Energy, the largest energy company in Iowa.

Berkshire Hathaway's latest California solar project is the world's largest at \$2.5 billion. The state's regulatory environment supports the added cost.

"As utilities bring new projects online in California ... at the top of the list for regulators is energy efficiency, renewable energy," Weisgall said. "In the Midwest, in the state we are regulated as a utility, cost is still the major factor."

Weisgall was among wind industry leaders who fielded questions Monday about a new study, outlining the economic impact of wind.

America's Power Plan, a coalition of industry, academia and energy experts, said \$30 billion had been invested in wind generation in 12 Midwestern states since 1994. The projects power 17 million homes, according to the report, sponsored by the Energy Foundation, a clean energy advocacy group based in San Francisco.

Nathaniel Baer, energy program director at the Iowa Environmental Council, said a few Iowa utilities -- such as Traer's municipal utility and Farmers Electric Cooperative near Iowa City -- are building solar capacity without solar mandates.

But Baer said setting standards can help drive renewable energy development. He points to legislation in the 1980s that helped build the state's wind industry.

Weisgall said wind energy will provide nearly 40 percent of MidAmerican's energy portfolio when the Des Moines-based utility finishes investing \$1.9 billion in new wind projects.

"Wind is a great example of setting a goal and seeing what follows," Baer said, adding that states also can reach solar goals through distributed energy generation -- panels that power homes, businesses and farms in Iowa.

The Iowa Legislature agreed last month to triple tax credits for solar development to \$4.5 million last month. The legislation is awaiting Gov. Terry Branstad's signature.

